

KUDA LUMPING DANCE AS LEARNING MEDIA TO FULFILL AESTHETICAL AND EXPRESSION DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

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Abstract

Indonesia is rich in cultural and traditional arts which grow and develop among various remote areas across the nation. One of well-known traditional dances is *Kuda Lumping* dance which thrives from Java Island specifically in Central Java. *Kuda Lumping* can almost be found in every district in which all people from different ages like it. As a traditional dance, *Kuda Lumping* can also be played either by adults or by children. Regarding this, this study is aimed at analyzing *Kuda Lumping* dance as a medium for aesthetic fulfillment and expression especially for young children education. A qualitative method with three research instruments namely observation, interview, and documentation were utilized to collect data. The data were then validated by using triangulation. Meanwhile, data analysis was done by an interactive model through data presentation, reduction, verification throughout the process, and research focus description. The results of the study showed that generally children have an aesthetic potential which is indicated from aesthetic expressions of their body movements. Their hands, feet, head and body move following the music rhythm. Children were able to perform some hand gestures such as *ukel*, *ulaulap*, *ngithing*, *ngruji*, and *nyempurit*. In addition, those motions are functioned as a medium expression for children that gave them energy and space to express their feelings. Therefore, *Kuda Lumping* dance offers media in the form of motions and musical elements that both of them can encourage students to express their feelings.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Expression, *Kuda Lumping* Dance, Young Children

1. Background

Indonesia is the largest archipelago country in the world with a big number of islands containing 17,508 islands. It consists of 5 large islands and 30 small island groups including 9,634 unnamed islands and 6,000 uninhabited islands. In fact, 3 of the 6 largest islands in the world come from Indonesia, namely Kalimantan as the third largest island in the world with an area of 539,460 km², Sumatra for 473,606 km² and Papua with an area of 421,981 km². Meanwhile, Java Island is known as the most populous island in the world at which 60% of Indonesian population or about 130 million people who live on the island that only represents 7% of the total area in Republic of Indonesia.

Due to its huge territory and number of populations, Indonesia has big diversity. It has a plenty of cultures and traditional arts that originally grow and develop among remote areas across the nation. One of the well-known traditional dances is *Kuda Lumping* dance which drives from Java Island specifically from Central java. It can be found in almost of every district in Central Java in which all people from different ages enjoy its performance. So, this cultural performance is not addressed to adult watchers but also it is also interesting for children.

Art grows and develops in society in line with human existence. Artistic expression has been a part of both physical and spiritual human need. Therefore, art work often represents a mindset and a behavior of people in certain society. The existence of art is always related to how human needs can be fulfilled based on its function. Indeed, the function of art can be categorized into three parts namely *personal*, *social*, and *physical* functions. In terms of *Personal* function, it deals with fulfillment of personal spirit satisfaction and individual interests. Meanwhile, *social* functions are related to social, economic, political, cultural, and trust purposes. At the last, *physical* function deals with all needs for the human body.

In general, people fulfill their needs by using their culture functioning as a guide for their actions. In line with this, art as an integral part of the culture is one means of completing the integrative human's need, including *Kuda Lumping* dance. *Kuda Lumping* dance is a form of folk dance performed in groups and it is originally derived from Javanese culture in which it has developed among the society members which is functioned as an entertainment.

There several types of *Kuda Lumping* Dance as follow:

1. Jaranan Thek Ponorogo
2. Jaranan Kediri, Kediri
3. Jaranan sentherewe, Tulungagung
4. Jaranan Turonggo Yakso, Trenggalek
5. Jaranan Buto, banyuwangi
6. Jaranan Dor, Jombang
7. Jaran Sang Hyang, Bali
8. Jathilan Dipenogoro, Yogya and Central Java
9. Jathilan Hamengkubuwono, Yogya and Central Java

Taken from (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuda_lumping)

Previously, *Kuda Lumping* dance is considered as a part of religious ceremony before muslims put *mustaka* (dome) in a process of building a mosque or *musholla*. In the ceremony, there is also a *Kirab* which is done by residents who lived around the mosque. They followed dancing which was accompanied by tambourines and poems of praise to God. Some entertainment performances including *abiran-abiran* and *mask performance* or *kewan* are also done to cherish the event. As the time changes, there are also a lot of modifications done by the society members. Some cities where the traditional dance originally comes from such as *Magelang* district mention *arak-arakan* as *Dayakan* now. *Dayakan* is an art performance done in several sessions.

Javanese people are very enthusiastic about *Kuda Lumping* dance, whether people who intensely study about it or ordinary people who just watch and enjoy the show. This dance now has been widely known not only for ritual function but also for entertainment purposes. In addition, currently, it becomes one of teaching materials in dance studio which is also intended for young students. *Kuda Lumping* is also taught as one of activities in dance studios and schools. In this place, the students felt enthusiastic to practice all movements in *Kuda Lumping* dance. In fact, the participants who join *Kuda Lumping* dance are not only adults but also young children. They really enjoyed *Kuda Lumping* dance since it shows dynamic actions while the music gives a cohesive impression which successfully attracts the students' attention. Regarding this, it supports young children's motoric development at this age which is characterized by mature development of brain to regulate muscular nervous system (*neoromuskuler*). In addition, it allows children to be more agile and actively moving. Therefore, the provision of *Kuda Lumping* dance material supports young children especially in their early childhood development to be a medium to express their agility in their active phase.

In line with this, Hartono in his study (2012) found out that some young children's motoric ability can be stimulated through learning dance. This statement is supported by Kusumastuti and Hartono (2017) who prove that dancing brings advantages to young children's development particularly through *Kuda Debog* dance. Moreover, they (2017) claimed that socialization process for children in *Kuda debog* dance was done during

preparation stage, implementation of performances between dancers, surrounding community and guests who attended the show, and closing stage. Considering these reasons, the purpose of this current study is to analyze *Kuda Lumping* dance as a learning medium to fulfill aesthetic needs and expression for young children.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

A study conducted by Maria Cuellar-Moreno (2016) revealed that students develop motoric skills, rhythm and coordination of body parts in choreography learning process. However, this learning outcome for children limitedly facilitates them to be more creative, expressive, cognitive, emotional and sensitive. In addition, a study related to therapy was done by Prewitt, C. M. et al (2017) and it investigated benefits of using dance to improve cognitive executive function. It is believed that dance may improve better mood and quality of human life. Different from the previous study, a study conducted by Nicole Reinders (2015) claimed that dance and music are beneficial to stimulate and motivate individuals with down syndromes to expand social relationships, make people physically and psychologically active. Meanwhile, findings from Alison E Leonard's (2016) also showed that art plays an important role in education since aesthetic power of art can enhance students' perception and raise individuals' awareness. Therefore, dance as an artistic and aesthetic means of body expression helps learners realizing their expressions.

One of the important things about art work is that it has always two sides of subjectivity within a thing which come from observers' experiences and people who enjoy it. According to Kasidi (2017), art as a medium to create aesthetic form which can provide a sense of satisfaction for the audiences. It is due to its ability to express harmony between the form and content, use feeling to see something interesting, and show an artistic side of any important things in life concerning human beings and enlarging human feelings. In relation to the aesthetics as presented by Monroe Beardsley and then adapted by Kasidi (2017), something beautiful or aesthetic work contains several elements namely (1) unity which means that art works are arranged well by considering rules of art and constructing a perfect form. Besides, structurally interwoven between art constituent elements is linked in accordance with the functions in order to form a unity. (2) Complexity refers to various structure elements that build diversity in an art work as an attraction and uniqueness of the work. Then, (3) sincerity means that a good aesthetic work which has quality and makes it different from other works. In addition, De Witt H. Parker (in The Liang Gie, 2004) added that the aesthetic features of art have some characteristics such as organic unity, theme, variety, balance, development, and order.

According to Sachari (2002), a broader definition for aesthetic forms is a process of learning and refinement. Djelantik (1999) also stated that aspects of learning in aesthetics include; deepening sense of beautiful; strengthening love for arts and culture of nation; fostering refinement of taste; going in depth to understand interrelationship between art work and life order, culture, and economy of society; consolidating awareness of negative influences that could damage quality of arts and preservation of cultural values. Considering Djelantik's opinion about aesthetics, it indicates that aesthetics has a wider scope. Another opinion related to aesthetics is mentioned by Sachari (2002) mentioning that it is not only related to symbolization and meaning, but also power. Wealth can be observed through the face, while aesthetics values lay almost in all objects, ideas, and projections of human life.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis results, some aesthetic values of *Kuda Lumping* dance can be indicated from 1). Instruments (musical instruments), 2). motion, 3). game, and 4). poetry. All of them are simultaneously performed in *Kuda Lumping* dance and each of them will be elaborated as below:

3.1 Aesthetic Instruments

Deals with musical instruments, *Kuda Lumping* dance performance used a set of gamelan which consist of *Gong*, *Bonang (Kenong)*, *Saron* and *Kendang* to accompany the dance performance. Instead of this, the dance

performance is also accompanied by a musical instrument or musical *gending* with vocals (*sinden*) functioning as music cues or a music for dancer preparation before dancing. In addition, this instrument is intended create a harmony atmosphere, tempo, and dynamics of music in which the tempo should be moderate although in certain scenes it is arranged to be slower or faster.

From this performance, it is proved that traditional music instrument has an aesthetic value that may attract audience's attention because of its elements beauty. One of the most compelling elements is the way of the music presented in the performance. Therefore, audiences who watch traditional musical art performance will directly feel the elements of esthetic values simultaneously with elements of innate, inspirational, imaginary, rhythmic, melodic, sound of the original instrument which fulfill all purposes of the staging.

3.2 Aesthetic Motion

Aesthetic motion occurs when the young children moved based on rhythm of the music (both hand gestures, feet, head, and body gestures). Aesthetics of hand gestures were seen when the young children performed various motions such as *ukel*, *ulap-ulap*, *ngiting*, and *nyumprit*. *Ukel*. It is a movement in which young children make a form of hand rotation on the wrist. There is also right and left *ulap-ulap* motion in which right *ulap-ulap* is a movement of right hand which is bent in front of their forehead (wrist bent and radius bouncy), while the left hand is bent in front of waist. On the other hand, the rest of *ulap-ulap* movement is a left hand movement bent in front of their forehead (curved wrist and radius bouncy), while the right hand bent in front of their waist. At the last, *ngithing* hand motion is the same motion as *ukel* hand motion, *ngruji* or *Ngrayung* motion. The motion is done by firmly holding up all the fingers except the bent thumbs against the palm of the hand. The right and left hands are no different. *Nyemprit* motion is a posture when thumb of the hand attached the center of the middle finger that can be seen as the following:



Picture 1. An Early Child Playing Kuding Kepang

The purpose of this study is to analyze *Kuda Lumping* dance as a medium of aesthetic fulfillment and expression for young children. It reflects the spirit of heroism and military phase of an equestrian or cavalry. These senses of spirits can be seen from rhythmic, dynamic, and aggressive movements, and bamboo wave mimicking a movement of a great horse in the middle of a war. Esthetic value generated from these motions is strong and dashing which is formed through strong accents of motion, a fast tempo, and a wide volume of motion as performed below:



Picture 2. The Atmosphere of Jaranan Dance Training in Early Childhood Education

3.3 Game Aesthetics

Game Aesthetics of *Kuda Lumping* dance motions is obtained through an enjoyment and joyfulness of the young children during practicing the motions along with rhythm of the music. In this event, the young children are very cheerful and excited to follow all instructions given as if they were as young brave officers riding a war horse and fighting in the battlefield.

3.4 *Kuda Lumping* Aesthetic Poetry (Jaranan)

In general, *Kuda Lumping* dance performance used a song entitled *Jaranan*. The song lyric consists of aesthetic elements and meanings that are very good for educating young children to learn moral values as can be seen below:

Jaranan. .. Jaranan

Jarane jaran teji

Sing numpak ndoro Bei

Sing to poro slave

Check check nong ... check gung check

Jarane mlebu ning lurung

Thumping crash ... Crashing thud

Crashing ... prok prok

Thump jeder (2x)

Jaranan. .. Jaranan

Jarane jaran kepang

Sing nostang klambi brother

Mlakune ndhut ndutan

Check check nong ... check gung check

Jarane mlebu ning lurung

Thumping crash ... Crashing thud

Crashing ... prok prok

Thump jeder (2x)

Jaranan. .. Jaranan

Jarane is kore

Ora ono kendaline

Jarane mlayu dewe

Check check nong ... check gung check

Jarane mlebu ning lurung

Thumping crash ... Crashing thud

Crashing ... prok prok

Thump jeder (2x)

Jaranan dolanan song actually consists of four lines while the following lines are only repetitions. By looking at the poem deeply, there are some manners implied in the song such as: (1) Togetherness as stated in *sing numpak ndara Bei sing ngiring para menteri* reflecting a sense of togetherness between superiors and subordinates. Togetherness for a mutual need and help from someone who has higher position are required to help the lower one and vice versa. The high position is depicted as *ndara Bei* who needs companions of his ministers who are considered to have a lower position. (2) Respect people who have a higher position than us. Javanese culture has taught that a person who has a lower position must respect a person who has a higher position in society as represented in the lyrics of *sing numpak ndara Bei sing ngiring para menteri*. In this case, *Bei* is considered to have a higher position than his ministers, since the title *ndara Bei* can be only used to mention someone who has a high position and a noble ancestry in the Javanese society. Moreover, the great high horse rode by *Ndara bei* needs companions which were done by his ministers. Therefore, the ministers have a responsibility to accompany *ndara bei* and guarantee his safety. Considering this, it is clear that the manner needs to learn by the

students is an attitude of being respectful for the elder or the higher people than us and it was clearly modeled in *Kuda Lumping* dance performance.

3.5 Kuda Lumping Dance as an Expression Media for Young Children

Early childhood is a phase when children become very actively moving. Regarding this, art education which offers active and aesthetic activities is very important given to children since their early childhood as the golden age. The development of young children can be divided into five phases, namely: baby phase, infant phase, pre-school phase (age of Kindergarten), phase of the schoolchild (age of primary school children) and adolescent phase (Yusuf 2001: 149). Pre-school stage is one of the development phases that lasts about two to six years in children's life. At this phase, children begin to have an awareness of themselves as a man or woman who can organize in toilet training and recognize some things that are considered dangerous (harm themselves) (Joseph, 2001: 162-163). In addition, Joseph (2001) further explained that at this pre-school age, various aspects of children development in terms of physical abilities, language, intelligence, emotion, social and personality are in rapidly change and grow in this phase

***Kuda Lumping* Movement**

Motion is one of media to reveal art in a performance. It is the main pillar in an art performance which makes the performance looks great and strong. Motion can be categorized into four types. First is the motion expressed through symbolic meaning. Second, it is a pure motion that prefers to show beauty and does not convey meaningful messages. The third is *baton signal* which holds the main motion. Meanwhile, the fourth is the motion that makes a movement (Hermien 2000: 76-77). Among those various elements of dance, motion is the greatest supporting element in a dance performance that makes a change of place, object position, dancer's body or part of the dancer's body (Djelantik 1999: 27).

Kuda Lumping dance motion is classified as an expressive, dynamic, and attractive motion. The motion is accompanied with a lively rhythm, lively, and fast tempo. On the other side, being expressive refers to its movement which is done with a good expression based on the dance theme which depicts a gallantry of soldiers. Meanwhile, being dynamic is indicated from the dance motion which often moves from one place to another one, not only being stuck in one side. There are also variations in term of floor pattern which shape a direction of face and level. High level is indicated with stepping motion, medium level is shown by standing in the up position to premises, while the lower refers to sliding motion so the body falls with both hands as a buffer. On the other side, being attractive refers to the motion done with a loud rhythm and *rancak* which is also integrated with a motion springboard, a sliding motion and a dynamic movement of motion. In addition, *Kuda Lumping* dance requires a strong power from the dancer since volume of motion is large so that it gives an impression of dashing and being energetic.

The motions in *Kuda Lumping* which are energetic, expressive, dynamic, and attractive motion are appropriate if taught for early children as a medium of expression for them. Young children look very enthusiastic in making their motions. Those motions are easy for children to imitate and memorize. Furthermore, level and floor patterns of *Kuda Lumping* dance are able to attract children's attention and enthusiastically encourage them to dance.

Music of *Kuda Lumping* Dance

Music is an art sound dealing with sense of hearing (Jazuli 2016: 72). Music accompaniment can be classified into two types, e.g. internal music which is a dance accompaniment created by dancer itself such as shouting, pounding feet, singing of dancers. In Contrast, external music is a dance accompaniment that comes from outside the dancer itself, including *gamelan* instruments, *orchestral* music and recording music accompaniments (Murgiyanto 1983: 43-44). The sound is divided into two: the sound coming out of the participant or the audience and the sound coming out of certain instruments (Hermien 2000: 86).

The music used as a companion of *Kuda Lumping* dance is a music that is rhythmic and stomping giving an impression of spirit and compactness. The Music comes from the instrument emerged *saron*, *kenong*, *kendhang*, *bonang*, *gong*, *kempol*, and *Peking*. The song lyric was sung together by *waranggono* (male singer) and *sinden* (female singer) through accompanied by music instrument that sounds very beautiful *karawitan* (Javanese traditional music instrument). The music of *Kuda Lumping* dance creates an atmosphere of excitement for the dancers and draws young children's attention to be more energetic in their dancing.

Make-up and Costumes of *Kuda Lumping* Dance

Make-up is one of beauty elements in a dance performance. Dance make-up should be consistent with themes or content of the dance performances, thus it is necessary to consider some principles for dance make-up including: (1) Make-up should reflect and consider the dancer's character / role, (2) neatness and cleanliness of the make-up should be considered, (3) desired lines should be clear, (4) regulation of using make-up design should be used. In this case, stage make-up is a make-up particularly created for a performance on the stage. Indeed, appearance on the stage is different from everyday make-up. Types of stage make-up can be classified into two, namely: stage make-up (closed) and arena stage make-up (open). First, stage make-up (closed) is recommended to make the make-up firmer, clear the lines and thick, because the audience saw the show in a considerable distance. Meanwhile, arena stage make-up (open) does not need to be too thick but it should be smooth and neat because the audience is closer to the show (Jazuli 1994: 20).

According to Jazuli (1994), a dance performance will look more beautiful and attractive if it is supported by a matched make-up with content and theme of the dance. A beauty of cosmetology lies in arrangement of eye make-up, eyebrows, nose, cheeks, lips, and the whole face with a neat make-up line.

Costume is another element should be considered in the dance performance. Clothing is a tool used to cover parts of body in accordance with prevailing community norms. However, the use of clothing in a dance performance is more than that as it highly considers a beauty based on needs of dance players. Clothing is functioned to support the theme or content of dance and to clarify roles in a performance. A good costume dance is not only able to cover the body but also to support the design of the room when dancers are dancing (Jazuli 1994: 17-18). The beauty of dance also lies on the clothing collection. A beauty of the fashion will not appear unless all costumes elements are interrelated to each other showing a harmony. In addition, a diversity of styles and colors in dance performances is a means or media for aesthetic presentation.

By using costumes, young children become more excited. They did not only enjoyed motions and music of the dance but also very interested on their costumes and make-up used. The costumes used are colored in order to make children more interested. Although the make-up is intended for early children, it still gives a dashing impression.

Property of *Kuda Lumping* Dance

Property is a tool or equipment used in a dance performance. Commonly, the name of the dance is taken from the genuine object used in the performance, for example the umbrella dance using an umbrella as its property. The property or equipment is divided into two types (1) equipment that is directly related to dance performance and (2) stage property. Dance property is any equipment directly related to dancing, such as various forms of weapons, accessories used by players in their dancing performance. In contrast, stage Property is any equipment that is directly related to the stage / to support a dance performance, such as forms of decoration, trees, frames, back drop images (Jazuli 2016: 63).

The properties used in dance have different forms and functions from one another. The property used in every dance performance must match the contents of the dance performed, so it does not look strange. A suitability between the property used and the contents of the dance that bring the aesthetic impression for the audience.

All property used in *Kuda Lumping* dance has different forms and functions from one to another. Each property used in the performance should be in line with content or themes of the dance performances so that it can be meaningful and give an aesthetic impression for audiences.

4. Conclusion

Indonesia with its huge territory and its big number of populations which reach the fourth largest population in the world has a diversity of cultures and traditional arts. All of them grow and develop in various remote areas from Sabang to Merauke island. One of them is traditional dance named *Kuda Lumping* dance which thrives on Java Island, more specifically in Central Java. Almost in every district in central java, *Kuda Lumping* is performed and loved by the residents either by adults or young children.

Kuda Lumping Dance is functioned as a medium for a fulfillment of human aesthetic need in which children move all their body parts including their hands, feet, head and gesture by following the rhythm of music. Hand motion is done as they perform *ukel* motion. This motion is when children do hand movement in the form of hand rotation on the wrist. Then, there were also right and left ulap-ulap at which right *ulap-ulap* is a movement of right hand bend in front of forehead (wrist bent and radius bouncy) , while the left *ulap-ulpa* is the left hand bend in front of the waist. While the left ulap-ulap is a movement of left hand bendt in front of the forehead (curved wrist and radius bouncy), while the right hand bendt in front of the waist.

Furthermore, *ngithing* hand motion also can be found in *Kuda Lumping* dance performance. It is the same as the *ukel* hand motion. *Ngruji* or *Ngrayung* motion is done when all the fingers are firmly held up except the bent thumbs directed to the palm of the hand. There is no difference for right and left hand. The next motion is *Nyempurit* motion which is the posture when thumb of the hand attached to the center of the middle finger

The second point is that *Kuda Lumping* Dance mainly functioned as a medium Expression for young children. Once in a period, this function is a function that is clearly highlighted, even an absolute function, which means it cannot be interfered by other functions. It makes it taboo to combine art with other elements. In fact, when children indirectly perform *Kuda Lumping* dance, it gives them a space and energy to express their feelings. In other words, *Kuda Lumping* dance performance offer other elements such as motion and musical elements so that children can express their feelings both through the media of motion dance and music as an accompaniment.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that *Kuda Lumping* dance performance can be a medium for Aesthetic Needs Fulfillment and Expression for young children through some elements including: motion, music, dressing and costume, and properties used. The motion existed in the *Kuda Lumping* Dance is categorized as lively, energetic, expressive, attractive, and also dynamic. The motions characteristics in *Kuda Lumping* dance are very appropriate for young children who are undergoing an active phase of their motoric development. Meanwhile, the music used as a companion has a great nature to create spirit of dancers. Besides, a lively music is also one of the reasons for attracting young children's attention to move their body.

In addition, Make-up and costumes used in the dance performance has been created to be more interesting and attractive for young children education. The costumes should be more colorful to attract more attention while the make-up should remain a corrective make-up to make it dashing as they play an equestrian troop. At the last, the property used in this dance is a braided horse made of woven bamboo shaped like a horse, painted like a picture of a horse, and given a tail from imitative hair.

5. Suggestion

Considering the findings of the study, it is suggested for the owner of the art studio to keep developing *Kuda Lumping* dance training, especially for young children. By doing so, young children have a space to express their feelings and facilitate them in their active phase development.

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